

[**After** by elizabethfisher](#)

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Summary: Another take on what happened after Eleven closed the gate. Definitely contains fluff. Ships: Mileven, Mucas, Jancy, Jopper.

1. Chapter 1: The After

Hey everyone! This is my first official FanFiction. I use to write with my sister when I was a teen, sadly I'm probably way to old for this, but this has been stuck in my head forever. I'm not sure where it's going, but it will be more than just one chapter, mainly cause I already have chapter 2 written. It takes place right after they close the gate and will probably lead to at least the Snowball. I appreciate any feedback! Thank you for giving it a chance!

Disclaimer: I own nothing Stranger Things. The Duffers are amazing and I have no idea what will happen in s3 but I'm dying waiting!

Chapter 1: The After

Mike Wheeler paced the Byers front porch, waiting for headlights. It had been an hour since they had gotten back from the tunnels, but it seemed like forever waiting for her to come back from Hawkins Lab. After nearly a year apart he didn't know how much longer he could wait before knowing she was ok.

After they had gotten back to the Byers house a few things had occurred. Billy Hargrove was still passed out on the floor but Steve and Jonathan had managed to get him into the back of his car, which Steve had agreed to drive to Max's house as Jonathan followed to give him a ride back.

"I can't believe all this is real," said Max, as she and the boys watched them load up Billy.

"I hate to say I told you so but..." Lucas smiled at her.

"Whatever, Stalker," she rolled her eyes but there was a smile on her lips.

"Max, let's go," yelled Steve.

Max said her goodbyes to Lucas and Dustin, Will was inside in bed, worn out from the Mind Flayer leaving his body. Mike was sitting on the steps away from the others, waiting. Max stopped next to him on

her way to the car.

"Hey." He looked up for the first time. "She'll be ok. She seems like one tough chick."

Mike tried to smile, but failed. "She is. Thanks," he paused. "Zoomer."

Max smiled at him before running to the car where Steve was waiting. She finally felt accepted to The Party, though she wasn't sure how El being back would affect things, the girl hadn't seemed to care for Max and Max wasn't sure why. She leaned her head against the cold window as she directed Steve to her house.

Back at the Byers, Joyce had made everyone call their parents. The boys had all decided to stay, it was late and they wanted to be there for Will when he was feeling better. Nancy had ridden with Jonathan and he would drop her off at home. Joyce made them all sandwiches as they waited for Hopper and Eleven to get back, she had taken one to Mike on the porch but he refused to eat.

They had been home 15 minutes when the supercom had gone off.

"Anyone there? It's Hopper. Over."

Mike jumped from the porch, through the open front door, and grabbed the walkie talkie.

"Yes! We're here! It's Mike! Is El ok? Over."

"She's fine, kid. Just exhausted. We found some extra trouble at the lab that has to be taken care of. We'll be back soon."

"Extra trouble'? Is everything ok? Over!" But Mike got no reply. "Hello? Hello!"

He'd been on the porch ever since. Pacing off and on, stopping at any noise he heard, breathing in the chilly November air. Dustin and Lucas watched him through the open front door. Ms. Byers had given them the job of helping clean up so they could get to bed soon but they weren't doing the most efficient job.

"Think he's losing it?" Lucas said to Dustin as he swept up some

broken glass.

"Definitely," Dustin nodded. He held the dustpan for Lucas. "Weird that the chief had Eleven hidden all year, don't you think?"

Lucas nodded agreement. "Yeah. As weird as you housing a baby Demogorgan."

"Dude. Let it go."

"Never!"

Their argument was interrupted as they saw headlights through the door.

"Guys! Their back!" Mike yelled.

Hoppers old truck stopped in the driveway and he got out. Mike ran to the passengers side as the door opened and El tried to get out.

"Hold on, kid." He heard Hopper try to stop her but she was determined. She stepped out but stumbled. Mike reached her just before she fell. He saw that she had dry blood coming from both nostrils and both ears.

"I got you," he whispered to her as she leaned into him.

"Mike." Her voice was small, barely a whisper. "I did it."

"I know. You did great," Mike assured her.

"Let's get her inside," said Hopper as he let Mike help her into the house. He got her to the couch as everyone stood around looking at her.

"Mike. How's Will?" She was always worried about everyone else, never herself, though Mike.

"He's ok. The Mind Flayer left him. He's sleeping."

"Good." She looked like she was about to pass out as she leaned against Mike's shoulder. "Good," she repeated. She was holding his

hand as if letting go would physically hurt her. Mike tried not to be nervous about how close they were, and in front of everyone.

Mike looked at Hopper, "What happened?"

Now everyone looked at Hopper, wanting to know the same.

"Well, we got in ok. Those dogs weren't really around much as we were going down," he sighed and sat in one of the chairs near him. "We ran into Doc Owens, though. His leg was pretty messed up but he was alive. So after El closed the gate we got him out and to the hospital. Then came here." He lit a cigarette as he finished his story.

"That's it?" Dustin asked.

Hopper glared at him, "I'm sorry," he said sarcastically, "were you expecting something more?"

"No. Not at all," Dustin said quickly.

"Ok, kids," said Joyce, "I think it's time we get you guys settled for the night. It's been a big day. Hop, you staying?"

"Figured we would." Mike noticed the "we" referring to El and himself. He was still mad at Hopper about hiding her. "No sure she's up for the drive out to the cabin." Hopper looked over at El, who was buried deep in Mikes side. Her eyes were closed but she was still awake, listening. She clung to Mikes hand and Hopper knew there was no way he would get her to leave tonight.

Dustin and Lucas made pallets in the floor of Will's room. Will had briefly woken up and eaten a bit, but his mind was trying to heal itself by sleeping. Joyce had tried to help Eleven clean up in the bathroom, they had managed to wash the dried blood and smudge make up from her face and found her some more comfortable clothes.

El laid on the couch as Mike covered her up. She looked up at him with heavy eyes. "Mike?"

"Yeah?"

"I'm happy to be home."

Mike smiled at her, knowing that 'home' referred to being back with her friends. He sat down on the floor next to the couch. His head inches from hers as she lay there.

"I'm happy you're home, too. I'm so glad your ok, El. I wish I had known all year that you were ok."

She looked guilty. "I'm sorry," she whispered.

"No! No! It's not your fault. You were just trying to be safe. In the end you being safe is all that matters. I just... I just missed you. The guys thought I was crazy and no one really understood. It was just... a really hard year." He looked at the floor as he confessed this to her. He felt embarrassed and vulnerable.

"Mike?" She said, causing him to look up. "I understand. I missed you, too. It was..." she looked as though she was searching for a word, "lonely."

He took a risk and kissed her forehead. She smiled up at him. He closed his eyes and leaned his forehead against hers, feeling sleepy for the first time all night. Eleven closed her eyes, too, and lay there listening to Mike breath. She was exhausted but talking with him was so important to her. She smiled knowing that she was finally able to let him know he had no been alone in missing her, that she had missed him, too.

"Good night, Mike," she whispered as she drifted to sleep.

"Night, El," he was already half way asleep.

Thank you for reading! Chapter 2 coming soon! Any review or word of advice is much appreciated!

xoxo- El.

2. Chapter 2: Hopper

Que theme music.*

Chapter 2: Hopper

Jim Hopper sat at the Byers kitchen table. He had gone into the living room to check on El, finding her asleep on the couch, the Wheeler kid sitting on the floor next to the couch, his head right next to Eleven's, sound asleep. He wasn't sure how he felt about them being back together, yet. He knew El needed Mike but he felt like a father, protective of her, not wanting to see her heart broken by a boy.

Joyce Byers sat down in the chair next to him. He ate his sandwich in silence until she finally spoke.

"So you've had her this whole time?"

"Yes and no," he said. She waited. "She was out in the woods almost a month before I found her. I'd had a feeling she was out there, a hunter said he'd seen her, so I left food for her. One day she followed me back to the truck and let me take her to the cabin. She's been there ever since."

"Wow, Hop," Joyce looked shocked. "Wow. I can't believe you didn't tell me! All this stuff going on with Will and you've helped so much, but you couldn't trust me with this?" Hopper was surprised that she sounded genuinely hurt.

Jim had known Joyce forever, they had grown up in Hawkins together and he'd always considered her a friend, sometimes maybe more. The idea of her getting involved anymore than she already was with the people at Hawkins Lab bothered him.

"I didn't want those people at the lab to know she was around! They thought she was gone and I wanted to keep it that way. If they had found out you knew anything imagine what they could have done to you and the boys!"

She didn't look pleased, but she didn't argue any more. "You're right," she said. "You did what you felt was safest for her. You really care about her, don't you?"

Hopper sighed. He'd finished his sandwich and just wanted a cigarette, so he dug in his shirt pocket for one. He lit it before replying. "She's a special kid."

"So what really happened at the lab? It couldn't have been as easy as you made it sound to the boys."

"It wasn't." He passed her the cigarette. "We really got in ok, nothing major, but that gate was huge, Joyce. There I am, on this little elevator, with a little girl, who's suppose to close this huge gate to another world. I could see that 'Mind Flayer' in there. It reached out for her." He looked up and saw Joyce staring at him, worry in her face. The idea of that thing getting another kid was not comforting to her. "I don't know how she did it. It's coming out of the gate and she just throws up both hands and yells, blasting it back. She levitated! It was incredible."

"Do you really think all this is over now that it's closed?" She passed the cigarette back to Hopper.

He sighed and took a drag. "I don't know." He rubbed his forehead. "Whatever that thing is, it knows about her now. That was obvious. And she's strong, Joyce, but it seems to be strong, too. Think of the damage it could do if it was in her body like it was Will's, with her power. The gates closed but who's to say it can't be reopened? But we'll deal with that if it happens. All I know is right now I'm going to work on getting that girl a normal life. No more hiding, no more worrying. She deserves that."

Joyce nodded, thinking about everything Hopper had said. "I want to help, Hop. I don't know much about raising girls but I'll do whatever I can. She's saved us all more than once."

Little did either of them know Mike Wheeler has heard it all, too. He had gotten up to use the bathroom and was now standing behind the wall so they couldn't see him. A look of shock was on his face as he walked back into the living room. She levitated? She'd come face to

face with the Mind Flayer and won. He always knew El was strong but hearing just how strong was incredible yet worrying for the boy. He looked down at El, sleeping peacefully on the couch. What if the Mind Flayer got the gate open again? What would he do if it came for her next? He didn't think he would survive losing her again. The gate had to stay closed.

Mike grabbed a cover off a near by chair and curled back up on the floor next to the couch. He stared at at her, taking in how much she had changed in the last year. Her hair had grown so much, even gelled back he could see the curls at the end.

"Hey, kid."

He looked up to Hopper standing there. "Hey," he replied softly, not wanting to wake Eleven. Hopper sat in the chair Mike had pulled the blanket from.

"Look, kid, I just wanted to say I'm sorry. I know this year has been hard for you." As if, thought Mike. "But you never gave up on her. She hated that I wouldn't let her talk to you, but she tried to respect that I wanted her safe. She lived for your calls, kid. Every night. This wasn't easy for her either."

Mike looked at Eleven's sleeping face, Hopper continued. "I don't want to hide her anymore, but I don't know how safe it is for her to be out just yet. You have to understand that. There are still bad people out there that will want to use her as a lab rat."

"Yeah. I know." Mike answered softly, glancing at Hopper.

"But I won't hide her from *you* anymore."

The boys face lit up. "Really?"

"As long as you can follow the rules, we'll work something out."

"I can. I will. Promise."

Hopper nodded. "You're an ok kid, Wheeler. But you hurt her, I hurt you."

Mike looked back at El. "I could never hurt her. Never."

"Get some sleep. Tomorrow is gonna come way to early."

Mike leaned his head back on the couch, he heard El sign in her sleep. He smiled at her peacefulness, and he smiled knowing that he'd have a chance to form a real relationship with her. Hopper reclined the chair he was in and watched Mike. He still wasn't sure about it, but he was willing to give it a shot, just to see El happy.

I'm iffy about parts of this chapter but I'm hoping you guys like it!

Xoxo- El

3. Chapter 3: Drop Off

Jonathan Byers pulled up to the Wheelers house and parked, leaving the car running. It was late, the cold air had an oddly peaceful feeling knowing that the gate was closed, that no demo-dogs were out there.

"Do you think it's really all over?"

He turned to the girl next to him. Nancy Wheeler had been his saving grace tonight. She'd been there to hold his hand while trying to get the Mind Flayer to leave Will, and she continued to be a calm and strong presence as the evening continued. They had taken Steve back to his car, a very awkward ride for all of them, and he was now supposed to drop her off and head home.

"I don't know. I hope so," he answered her.

She was looking down at her hands where they were joined in her lap. "So... I've been thinking." She sounded nervous about whatever was about to come out of her mouth.

"About?"

"Us. This. Whatever this is."

"Oh," he didn't know what this was either. "We don't have to talk about it... I know I'm not Steve. I'm not popular or anything."

She looked up at him. "Is that what you think of me? That I was with Steve because he's popular? That I couldn't possibly like someone who's not?"

"I didn't say that."

"You boys are all the same! Such bullshit!" She reaches for the door handle.

"Nancy! That's not what I meant," he grabbed her hand. She stopped and looked at him. "I just meant... I don't want you to deal with what I deal with. I know what people say about me. About my family. I don't want them to say things about you because you're with me," he

paused, she quickly added, "if you'll be with me that is."

"I don't care what anyone has to say," she said strongly. "This is where I want to be. With you."

She leaned over and kissed him softly. They hadn't kissed since their night together, and this time it wasn't rushed with passion, but soft and sweet. Her hand rested on his cheek.

She finally pulled away, just far enough to whisper, "I'd better go." Before kissing him softly again quickly, then getting out of the car. He watched her walk across the yard and into the house. He couldn't bring himself to drive him just yet, so he watched until he saw her bedroom light come on. He then put it in drive and headed home, the feel of Nancy's lips still on his, a smile never leaving his mouth.

•Sorry this is short! I've literally written this chapter 3 times. I'm stuck as to where to go with the rest of the group right now, so I thought I'd throw a bit of Jancy out there to update for you guys while I'm working the rest out. Thank you all for the love and reviews! Any suggestions are appreciated!

Xoxo- El

4. Chapter 4: Friends

Mike Wheeler woke up to light coming in the window of the Byers' living room. His neck felt stiff from sleeping leaning over. The chilly November air was coming in the broken window and his mind recalled the events of last night.

Eleven.

He looked to the couch behind him. Empty. He jumped up, his blanket falling to the floor. The chief was still sound asleep in the chair, Mike took that as a good sign El was still here. He looked at the clock, 6 in the morning. He heard Will's laugh coming from the kitchen. To his surprise he found his best friend sitting at the kitchen table with Eleven, eating Eggos.

"Hey," Will said, looking up to see Mike. "I finally met Eleven."

Mike sat down next to her. "I forgot you two haven't officially met."

"Well, I've seen her in the..." he paused. "What do you call that?" He asked her. "When you find people?"

"I... don't know." She said slowly, obviously thinking about it. "It's... hard to explain."

"Can you do it with anyone? Find anyone, I mean?"

"Yes. If I've seen them before, I can find them."

"That's awesome," Will was just as fascinated with El's powers as everyone else was. "Does distance matter?"

"No. But the bath is the strongest way to do it if they are far. Or in the upside down."

"The bath?"

Mike filled in, "She means like a sensory deprivation tank. That's how she found you last year, when you were in the Upside Down. Normally, she'll use static, like from a radio or TV, but if she needs

more power, the tank helps."

El nodded, taking a bite of her Eggo. Mike looked at her.

"So, the chief been nice this year?"

"Yes," she paused. "I... wanted to tell you. When you called. But... not safe."

"We know, we're just glad you're safe and here now."

"Hell yeah we are!" Dustin came into the kitchen, dressed and ready for his day, followed by Lucas, who looked less than happy to be awake.

Eleven smiled at the boys. Mike could tell she was happy to be back with her friends.

Dustin started digging around for food as Lucas sat down. He went for the fridge just as Will yelled, "Don't!"

But it was too late. The dead demodog fell out. All the boys made faces, a round of "oh man" and "gross" was heard throughout the room.

"Son of a bitch! I forgot about that!"

"Ya think?" Said Lucas, sarcastically.

"We should probably get that out of here before my mom gets up," said Will.

"I'm not touching it!" Stated Lucas.

Just then, the demodog started to float.

"You know, that never gets less cool," Dustin smiled at Eleven. She gave him a smile, blood starting to drip from her nose. Dustin opened the back door and she moved it outside quickly as they heard a door open in the hallway.

"Well, you guys are up early!" Ms. Byers came hurrying into the

kitchen, dressed for work. "Will, sweetie, you up for school today?"

"Yeah, I think so. I feel... better."

This relieved everyone in the room.

"Hop still sleeping?" She asked. A round of nods answered. "Well, you boys finish breakfast and get ready for school, I'll get him up."

"What about El?" Asked Mike, as Joyce hurried out of the room, not hearing him. Mike looked at Eleven. She had a worried look on her face. "Don't worry. We'll figure it out. We'll find a way to keep you safe, and hang out with us."

"Yeah." All the boys nodded in agreement.

An hour later all the boys were ready to go. Hopper was taken Eleven back home to the cabin.

"I know it's not what you want, kid," he told her. "But it's the safest place we have. We keep following the rules, we stay not stupid, and we lay low, that's how you stay safe."

Eleven nodded. She wasn't happy, but she knew he was right.

"We'll make a way for you to see your friends, ok? Maybe they can come out and visit."

At this the boys all got excited. Having their Mage back, being a full party again, was something they weren't sure would ever happen again.

"But," Hopper's voice was serious, "but you all follow the rules. Understood?"

"Yes!" Came from four mouths.

"Alright. Say your goodbyes for now. We gotta get going." With that he lit a cigarette and walked out to the car.

Joyce came to Eleven and hugged her deeply. "Oh, sweet girl. You let me know if you need anything, ok?" El nodded into her chest. "I'll see

you soon. Maybe we'll talk that mean old man into letting you come over for a game night sometime. Would you like that?" Joyce asked as she let go.

"Yes."

Joyce nodded and moved out of the way. Will was next. He hugged Eleven. "It was nice to finally meet you."

"You, too."

Dustin and Lucas hugged her. When it came to Mike's turn, Joyce ushered the other boys out to the car, giving Mike a moment alone with El.

"I swear this isn't goodbye. Not again. Ok?" He said. She nodded. "I'm going to hold him to letting us see you. I promise."

"I know."

He hugged her hard. "I'll call you after school, ok? Just like every night." He pulled back but didn't let go. He leaned in to kiss her when he heard the chief yell "let's go!" Mike started to let go, but El surprised him with a quick kiss. He smiled so big his cheeks hurt.

Three o'clock couldn't come fast enough for the boys. Max met them after class as they waited for Jonathan on the sidewalk. Since none of them had their bikes, he was their way home.

"Hey, stalkers!" Then she lowered her voice. "You guys going to see El today?"

"We don't know," Lucas told her, "Mike wants to go talk to the chief, but I don't think he'll let us."

"He has to," said Mike, he was impatiently waiting for Jonathan. "We just got her back. We just learned she was ok. He kept her from us long enough. He's not the boss. It's not like he's her dad."

"Well, he has taken care of her for almost a year now..." said Will.

"Yeah, Will's right," agreed Dustin. "He's kept her safe this long. We've

got to trust him on that."

Mike rolled his eyes. Jonathan pulled up with Nancy in the car next to him.

"I've got to get home," Max told them. "My brothers already on a war path, but I think he took last night seriously. If you guys get to go see her, let me know."

"We will," Lucas told her as she waved bye and headed towards Billy's car.

"Why?" Asked Mike. "Why would she want to know? She doesn't even know El."

"Yeah, well, she's a girl. Eleven is a girl," said Dustin, getting in the back seat.

"Duh," said Mike, sliding in next to Nancy. "And?"

"And, I don't know. Girls hang out with other girls, don't they, Nancy?"

"Um, yeah. Totally," she said, as if being a girl made her an expert on Eleven specifically. "He might be right," she said to Mike. "Eleven's only ever had you guys, she might like having a girl who knows the truth and could be her friend."

Mike didn't like it. He still wasn't sold on Max, but he would never deny El having a friend like he had in Will, Lucas, and Dustin. If Max could be there for El the way they were for him, then he'd learn to give the girl a chance.

"So, where to?" Jonathan asked Mike.

"To find Hopper."

So sorry it's taken me way to long to update! I've write this so many times and was never happy with how it went. All the buzz with s3 has pushed me to finally get back to it!

xoxo- El.